

Hawaii MARINE

VOLUME 36, NUMBER 9

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MARCH 3, 2006



On Target:
Who's the best?
A3



Something's
fishy in Waikiki
B1



Sports: Golden
Eagles soar
C1

3/3 Warriors head to Iraq

Sgt. Monroe F. Seigle
Combat Correspondent

Approximately 60 Marines from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment left Hawaii in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Friday. The Marines were part of an advanced party from America's Battalion that is scheduled to deploy to Iraq for seven months.

When they arrive in Iraq early next month, their first mission is to begin the logistical and administrative process that will ensure a smooth transition for the rest of the battalion.

Many of 3/3's Marines and Sailors are no strangers to combat deployments. Just nine months ago, the Warriors returned from a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. While there, they conducted operations to ensure security and to allow for the further development of the local government.

"I keep thinking to myself what this deployment is going to be like," said Sgt. Wilton Ward, battalion warehouse chief for 3/3. "We have trained and trained to get ready. I know that my Marines and I have

spent the last few weeks issuing out close to \$2 million in gear to keep the Marines safe. I don't think you can find a pair of size nine-and-a-half combat boots — that aren't claimed — anywhere on this island. We have also issued out two pair of camouflage utilities for every Marine in the battalion."

Some of Ward's junior Marines are deploying for the first time, but he said he thinks they have all been properly trained and are ready for combat operations in western Iraq.

Gunnery Sgt. Roger Kraft, company gunnery sergeant for Lima Company said he agreed

that the Marines have been well trained and are ready to conduct combat operations. He has spent many hours away from his wife Carissa and their two boys while away at different training areas with his Marines to ready them for the deployment.

"Right now, I am more concerned with my family and my Marines than I am myself," said Kraft on the last full day he spent with his family. "My goal out there is to make sure my Marines and I come back safely to our families."

See 3/3, A-5



Sgt. Monroe F. Seigle

Several Marines from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment departed Hawaii Feb. 24 to deploy to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Marines, many of whom are veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, will spend the next seven months in Iraq to assist in the training of the Iraqi Security Forces.

March is Women's History Month

Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson
Combat Correspondent

For hundreds of years, women like Amelia Earhart and Condoleezza Rice have been doing incredible things to make a difference in the world.

March is Women's History Month and was created to increase the knowledge of the contributions women, such as Earhart and Rice, have made throughout history.

Women's History Month began March 8, 1911, in Europe and was called "International Women's Day." In the United States in 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women began a "Women's History Week" celebration which coincided with Europe's Women's Day, according to the National Women's History Project Web site.

The creation of Women's History Week led to schools assigning their students certain projects that dealt with women in certain periods in history. Exhibits were also set up to honor women's accomplishments, which was called

See History, A-4

A hero's welcome



Cpl. Megan L. Stiner

Maj. Randy Pugh, operations officer, 3rd Radio Battalion, jokes with his daughter, Morgan, 6, Feb. 27, upon returning home from an eight-month deployment to Iraq. Pugh was welcomed home by his family with a lei, miniature American flags, and hugs and kisses.

Honored Marine receives Bronze Star

Sgt. Monroe F. Seigle
Combat Correspondent

In a ceremony held at the Base Theater, Friday, Cpl. Troy Arndt, fire-team leader, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment was awarded the Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device for heroism for his actions during a firefight May 8, 2005, in Afghanistan that claimed the lives of two of his friends.

According to reports, Arndt faced death but continued to fight the insurgents that claimed the lives of Cpl. Richard Schoener and Lance Cpl. Nicholas Kirven — two warriors Arndt said he would always call great Marines and great friends.

Arndt was presented the medal by Lt. Col. Norman L. Cooling, battalion commander, 3/3, in the presence of fellow 3/3 Marines who deployed to Afghanistan with him.

"I am confident that what Cpl. Arndt did that day saved the lives of other Marines," said Cooling after he presented Arndt with the Bronze Star.

Arndt deployed to Afghanistan November 2004 with America's Battalion to support Operation Enduring Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism.

"I wasn't sure what to expect," said the 22-year-old Palmyra, Pa. native. "I heard a lot of what the media said, and I was ready to go out there and dodge bullets every day. It was something I wanted to do regardless of the danger."

By May 8, 2005, Arndt had been in Afghanistan for six months and on that morning, two squads from Second Platoon set out on foot for the village of Tili for an assessment of the village and to see if there was anyone in the village who needed humanitarian assistance. While in the village, the platoon looked for suspected al Qaeda operatives who might be lurking amongst the civilian populace.

Third Squad entered the village first and they intercepted radio transmissions from insurgents who were discussing plans to ambush the Marines.

See Bronze Star, A-4



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

Mohammed Rhakman (left), a democratically elected Kunar Province district chief and Army Capt. Michael Breen, platoon leader for 1st Platoon, Delta Battery, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, congratulate each other following a recent meeting at an Afghan National Police outpost in Nangalam, Afghanistan.

Afghan fighters lay down arms

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

NANGALAM, Afghanistan — Nearly two dozen former insurgents recently came down from throughout the surrounding mountains of this war-torn region of Kunar Province in eastern Afghanistan to lay down their arms and reconcile with the democratically elected Afghan government.

The fighters were a mixture of the Anti-Coalition Militia and included former Taliban with probable ties to al Qaeda, noted 1st Lt. James Campbell, Camp Blessing officer-in-charge, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

"This deal was brokered by Mohammed Rhakman, a district chief for Kunar Province, and was done in conjunction with the support of tribal elders and a joint Marine Corps, U.S. Army and ANP (Afghan National Police) effort," said Campbell, a native of Newburgh, Ind. "This is the first time a meeting of this caliber has occurred in Kunar Province — with actual fighters coming down and saying, 'We've had

enough.' This wasn't a surrender per se. It was a reconciliation."

The meeting was held at an ANP outpost in the small village of Nangalam, near the coalition forces' forward operating base at Camp Blessing.

"In and of itself, two dozen ACM fighters coming down from the mountains and reconciling may not seem like a big deal," said Army Capt. Michael Breen, platoon leader for 1st Platoon, Delta Battery, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment out of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. "In this area of the country, however, that has such a long track record — a tradition really — of opposing coalition forces and outsiders, I think it is a very significant event. I haven't seen anything even close to this happening before, and I hope in a few years, history will look back on this event as the beginning of the end of hostilities in this region."

According to the Campbell, this event illustrated the importance of the coalition policy of forming relationships and

See Reconcile, A-5

News Briefs

Aloha Fair

A CG’s Community Aloha Fair and Information Forum will be held March 14 at Kahuna’s Ballroom from 5 to 7 p.m. to explore the activities and services offered aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii and in the surrounding community. Numerous organization representatives from Marine Corps Community Services and the community will provide information and answer questions about the programs and services that they offer. Attendees will enjoy free pupus and exciting prize giveaways. For more information, call the MCCS Marketing Department at 254-7679.

CI/HUMINT Specialists Needed

Marine Corps Counter Intelligence/Human Intelligence is looking for intelligent, motivated, multi-talented and ambitious corporals, sergeants and staff sergeants who have less than eight years time in service for a lateral move to the 0211 military occupational specialty. For information on prerequisites, training and operations ask your career retention specialist, Marine Corps Base Hawaii Base Career Retention Specialist Master Sgt. Buckley at 257-7723 or the Marine Forces Pacific CI/HUMINT Branch at 477-8447.

Recruiter Assistants Needed

Want an opportunity to earn promotion points and spend up to 30 days at home without taking leave? The Marine Corps Recruiting Station in Pittsburgh is looking for motivated Marines to serve as recruiter assistants. For more information about the recruiter assistance program in your hometown area, contact Staff Sergeant Ronald L. Samuel at (412) 395-6355.

Registration open for SSWLS

The 2006 Sea Service Women’s Leadership Symposium, to be held March 21 aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, is now open for registration. The event is open to all leaders. The primary goals for SSWLS are to actively support the sea services in the retention and career development of women and leaders of women, be an essential element in maintaining operational readiness, provide professional development and mentoring, and support gender diversity. To register visit www.sswls.org or call 1-866-462-2838

Scholarship Announcement

The All Enlisted Spouses Club 2006 Scholarship applications are in and open to dependents and spouses of MCBH enlisted service members. Stop by the AESC Thrift Shop or the Joint Education Center to see if you qualify for the scholarship. Completed applications must be turned in no later than April 15. For more details, visit the Thrift Shop, in Pless Hall, Building 212 on 3rd Street, or call 254-0841.

Road Work Continues

From now through March 17, traffic on Hawkins Street, Mokapu Road, Harris Ave. and Selden Street will be periodically interrupted between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The roadways will undergo hot AC patchwork, mow strip completion, and curb, gutter, and sidewalk repair. One lane will be shut down at a time, when necessary to facilitate repairs. Point of contact for this matter is the Family Housing Tenant Relations Manager Andy Gasper who can be reached at 257-1257, ext. 287.

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Military Police	257-7114
Child Protective Service	832-5300
Fraud, Waste, Abuse & EEO	257-8852
Business Management Hotline	257-3188
Pothole & Streetlight Repair	257-2380
Base Information	449-7110
MCBH Duty Chaplain	257-7700

Hawaii MARINE

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National Prayer Breakfast tradition continues



Lance Cpl. Roger L. Nelson

Brig. Gen. Steven A. Hummer, commanding general, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, speaks to attendees during the National Prayer Breakfast at Anderson Hall Dining Facility, here, Feb. 23. The original purpose to hold a prayer breakfast was to find divine guidance for the United States national leadership. In 1970, it became known as the “National Prayer Breakfast.”

Women’s History Month Upcoming Events

March 21
Sea Services Women’s Leadership Symposium
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Base Theater

Open to all members of the sea service, the SSWLS primary goals are to actively support the sea services in the retention and career development of women and leaders of women, be an essential element in maintaining operational readiness, provide professional development and mentoring, and support gender diversity.

To register, visit www.sswls.org or call 1-866-2838.

March 23
Missing in Action Remains Recovery
1 p.m. at the Base Theater.

Dr. Elizabeth Goodman and Dr. Joan Baker will give a presentation that highlights their research efforts, which included expeditions to Southeast Asia and to an Iraq mass-burial site. Goodman and Baker are anthropologists for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command located at Hickam Air Force Base.



GOODMAN

Goodman completed her master’s and doctorate degrees in Anthropology at the University of New Mexico and has 15 years experience working archaeological sites that include Arizona, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon, Montana, Washington, Wyoming, and Peru. She published some of her paleoparasitology research in “Memorias do Instituto Oswaldo Cruz.”



BAKER

Baker completed her master’s degree in Anthropology at Syracuse University and received her doctorate at Texas A&M University. She also has 15 years of archaeological field and laboratory experience at sites in New York, Texas, and Jamaica. Her articles have been seen in publications such as the “American Journal of Physical Anthropology” and the “Bulletin of the Texas Archaeological Society.”

Weekend weather outlook

Today



Day — Mostly to partly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 10-15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

Night — Mostly to partly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 10-15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

High — 72-78
Low — 62-70

Saturday



Day — Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 10-15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

Night — Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 10-15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

High — 72-78
Low — 61-70

Sunday



Day — Partly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

Night — Partly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. Chance of rain 50 percent.

High — 72-78
Low — 59-68



ON TARGET

Marines prepare for Pacific Division showdown

**Story and Photos by
Lance Cpl. Edward C. deBree**
Combat Correspondent

Shooting on the rifle range is one of many training elements that Marines must go through every year. The ability to engage on a target up to 500 yards away is something that no other military service prepares for.

February 23, Marines here prepared themselves for the Pacific Division Matches, which will be held next week.

“This is one of four division match competitions that is shot annually,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Billy R. Williamson, representative for Pacific Division Weapons Training Battalion, Quantico, Va.

“There are four locations where these competitions are held at,” he said. “There’s the Far East, which is in Okinawa; Western, in Camp Pendleton; Eastern, in Camp Lejeune; and the Pacific Division, which is held here in Hawaii.”

While training for the matches, the 55 Marines competing from here will shoot the M16A2 service rifle and the M9 service pistol. For the rifle matches, the Marines will shoot from 300 yards in the standing and prone positions. They will fire 20 rounds each in slow and rapid fire.

For the pistol matches, the Marines will shoot from 25 yards away with 10 rounds each in slow, timed, and rapid fire, said

Williamson.

The winners of the Pacific Division teams win points toward their distinguished shooting badges and compete for either the Smith Trophy, for the rifle, or the Finn Trophy for the pistol, according to Williamson. But the top winners win something more.

“The top 10 percent winners get an all-expense trip to Camp Lejeune to compete in the Marine Corps championship,” said Williamson. “That championship is the best of the best competing. Those matches are for the bragging rights of saying that you are the best shooter in the Marine Corps.”

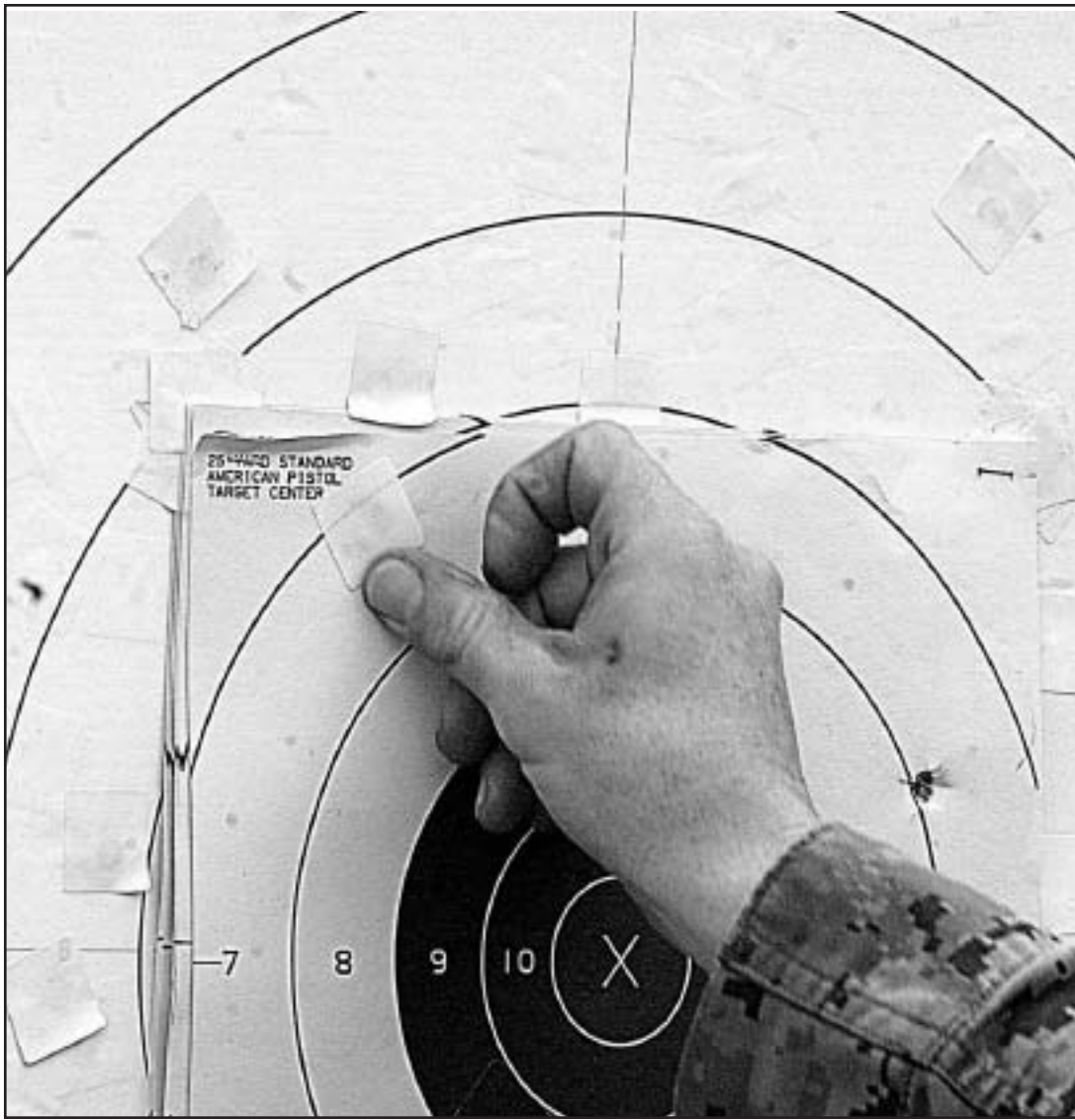
But this is the only competition that awards Marine Corps points to those who participate in it, said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Carroll Duncan, officer-in-charge, Range Training Facility, here.

“This program makes Marines more confident in themselves as Marines. It motivates them to better themselves in the other aspects of Marine training,” he said. “What we do here is teach the fundamentals of shooting, but it is very stressful because you’re competing against other Marines, and Marines are very competitive.”

Duncan and Williamson agreed that due to the stress of the matches, Marines who compete end up better shooters in a combat situation.

“This is as close to combat as it can get,” said Duncan. “When you’re in combat, the stress level is extremely high, and when you compete in these matches, the stress is extremely high because you have everybody looking at you. And it’s a shame that more Marines can’t come out here to do this.”

The competition will be held next week at the rifle range, and an award ceremony will be held Friday.



Top: Sgt. Robert Byrne, career planner, Headquarters Battalion, aims in on a target, Feb. 23, at the rifle range. Marines are currently training for the Pacific Division matches which will be held next week.

Above: A Marine repairs his target after shooting the M9 pistol during the Pacific Division matches at the rifle range.

Left: Sgt. Justin W. Ward, block noncommissioned officer, Rifle Range, aims in on a target during the pistol practice during the Pacific Division matches Feb. 23.



Left: Marines practice their shooting skills to prepare to compete in the Pacific Division matches at the rifle range.

Bronze Star, From A-1

Second Squad continued to patrol a trail and 3rd Squad relayed the radio traffic they were intercepting. In a matter of minutes, 3rd Squad received another radio transmission from the enemy that stated the Marines had passed their position and they would try to ambush them when they returned.

“I remember coming to a security halt and some pop shots came out of nowhere,” recalled Arndt. “Third Squad knew where the shots were coming from and fired at the point of origin, while we went down to cross a river and came in contact with two armed Al Qaeda insurgents. We fired at them, and they retreated.”

Soon after, 2nd Squad engaged in a firefight with two enemy fighters who were hiding in a cave. Kirven killed one of the two enemy fighters with indirect fire with his M203 machine gun. The other was eliminated by direct fire from the rest of the squad.

When Arndt and his squad continued to clear the

valley, they came upon an enemy fighter they believed to have been killed in action. Schoener and Kirven went to check to make sure the enemy was not just pretending to be dead. While doing this, an undetermined amount of insurgents came out of a cave and shot Kirven and Schoener with a quick burst of machine-gun fire.

Arndt and his squad came behind the injured Marines and another firefight broke out. A grenade was thrown by the insurgents and landed beside Kirven mortally wounding him.

Arndt tried to move to a higher position to throw a grenade, but was unable to due to incoming fire. He quickly pulled back to regroup.

“I remember hearing the lieutenant yelling out that he could not see where the enemy was, because his view was blocked by a rock,” said Arndt. “I knew where they were, and I told the lieutenant. There was a lot of smoke keeping the enemy from seeing us, so we moved to another rock and the smoke cleared.”

Arndt said that he and 1st



Sgt. Monroe F. Seigle

Cpl. Troy Arndt, fire-team leader, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, receives the Bronze Star from Lt. Col. Norman L. Cooling, battalion commander, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Regiment, and Sgt. Major William Stables, sergeant major, 3/3, for his actions May 8, 2005, in a firefight during Operation Enduring Freedom. Arndt risked his life in the face of heavy enemy fire to rescue two Marines who were mortally wounded and to eliminate the enemy forces responsible for the ambush.

Lt. Stephen J. Boada, artillery officer for 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, were then 15 meters away from the cave entrance, and the firefight continued. Using teamwork, Arndt prepared grenades and provided cover fire while Boada threw the grenades at the insurgents.

Concerned for the safety of his fellow Marines who

remained motionless not far from him, Arndt ran and grabbed Schoener by his equipment and tried to pull him out of the firefight, putting himself mortal danger. During his initial attempt to pull Schoener to safety, Arndt slipped and fell and several rounds from insurgent weapons flew by him, hitting a rock just inches

away from him.

After Boada had thrown more grenades at the insurgents, Arndt went back and successfully pulled Schoener to safety while another Marine grabbed mortally wounded Kirven and brought him to safety as well.

America’s Battalion soon eliminated the insurgents, and the Marines began the approximately seven-mile descent down the mountain with their fallen comrades.

“That patrol was supposed to last only five hours,” said Arndt, who will be leaving the Marine Corps later this year. “It ended up lasting more than 20 hours. We were low on food and water, and we came back with two less Marines than we left with.”

Arndt said his feelings about receiving the medal for his actions that day are bittersweet. He credits his America’s Battalion Marines for the ultimately successful mission that day.

As far as Arndt is concerned, that firefight will be etched into his memory forever – along with the memory of the two brave Marines who gave their lives that day.

“I was not thinking about what I was doing that day. I just wanted to get my friends out of there, and myself and the lieutenant were the only ones close enough to do anything,” recalled Arndt. “I often think about what I could have done to save those two Marines.

“It is an honor to get a Bronze Star, but I wish I could trade it in and exchange it for the lives of those two Marines — but I can’t.”

Arndt was recently accepted to Pennsylvania State University where he said he would pursue a career in law enforcement or a job with the United States Secret Service when he is released from active duty.

“I am proud of my son, said David Arndt. “I feel privileged to have a son like him. He put his life on the line for our freedom.”

“It is important for American’s to realize the price Marines are paying out there,” said Arndt.

“Two Marines made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom May 8, 2005. That makes freedom ironic — it is not free at all.”

History, From A-1

the “National Women’s History Project.”

In 1987, National Women’s History Project representatives requested that Women’s History Week be expanded to one month. The United States Congress accepted this request and issued a resolution to make every March Women’s History Month.

“It makes me feel good to know a whole month is set aside to recognize the contributions women have done for

the world,” said Lance Cpl. Rosemary V. Cuppernell, household good specialist, Traffic Management Office, Headquarters Battalion.

“There have been a lot of women throughout history who have done incredible things and they should be acknowledged.”

According to Lance Cpl. Leeann M. Gutkowski, administration clerk, Installation Personnel Administration Center, women play a big part in today’s society.

“Women in the military

should be acknowledged a lot more,” said 20-year-old Cuppernell. “When you see commercials and pictures of military personnel, it’s always males. Women in the military should get a lot more acknowledgment. They’re just as important.”

The theme of this year’s Women’s History Month is intended to give women from all walks of life more recognition.

The theme, “Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams,” honors women for

bringing communities together and restoring hope in the face of impossible odds, according to the National Women’s History Month official Web site, www.NWHP.org.

Also in recognition of Women’s History Month, library exhibits, a five-kilometer run, and other events will be held on base.

According to Staff Sgt. Gabriel P. Wilson, substance abuse counseling officer and equal opportunity representative, Combat Service Support Group 3, a Women’s

Appreciation Night will be held at The Officers’ Club March 9 and at the SNCO Club March 31.

“A lot of events are scheduled in March for the recognition of Women’s History Month,” said Master Sgt. Milton D. White, base equal opportunity advisor.

“We’ve got Doctors Elizabeth Goodman and Joan Baker scheduled to speak on POW/MIA recovery missions March 23 at 1 p.m. at the Base Theater,” said Wilson. “There is also a Women’s Bench Press

Competition being held on base March 22. All of the events are in recognition of Women’s History Month.”

For more information on events being held to commemorate Women’s History Month, contact Staff Sgt. Gabriel P. Wilson at 216-7186.

Reconcile, From A-1

working in conjunction with village elders.

“In Afghanistan the tribal system is very powerful,” said Campbell. “Basically, what the elders say goes among their villagers, and what was so promising about this meeting was that elders from different villages who don’t always see eye to eye were able to come together and reach an agreement and then put pressure on the fighters to come down from the mountains and lay down their weapons. What the elders have said is that those individuals fighting in the mountains against the coalition forces will not be afforded any sanctuary in the surrounding villages, and furthermore, they will be considered enemies of the villages and dealt with accordingly.”

“This meeting has the potential to be the catalyst that changes this entire region,” continued Campbell. “These men who have ceased fighting and have come down from the mountains to reconcile are free to return to their homes, open shops, and start over with their families. If others that are still fighting us up in the mountains

see that these guys are getting a second chance and have turned over a new leaf, then I think this event could be a huge turning point. Time will tell.”

According to Breen, the reconciliation policy applies to low-level insurgent fighters and involves certain formal declarations to the Afghanistan government.

“There is obviously a certain level of security and intelligence provisions associated with these fighters reconciling,” said Breen, a native of Portsmouth, N.H. “We don’t just sign them a blank check and say, ‘OK, here’s your get out of jail free card.’ It’s more like, we are going to get your picture, get your information, know where you live and keep tabs on you. If you stray from the path then all bets are off and we’re gonna be on you again with a vengeance.”

According to Campbell, who served as a scout sniper platoon commander with 1/3 before taking the reins of Camp Blessing, there was a level of trust and basic warrior honor during the meeting.

“Both sides had to take it on at least some faith that the other side was going to live up to its word that there would be no

violence at the meeting,” said Campbell. “Representing the coalition forces at the meeting were myself, Captain Breen, a Marine sergeant, an Army sergeant, an ANP official, our Afghan interpreter and of course, most importantly, Mr. Rhakman — who many believe has the potential to become a significant political figure in Afghanistan someday.”

“That was it, in a room with two dozen fighters who just the day before had probably been trying to kill us, and us them,” continued Campbell. “It just once again showed how much respect Mr. Rhakman commands as well as how much pull the tribal elders have to orchestrate a meeting of this nature. Our policy of respecting the tribal system here and the culture of Afghanistan are obviously paying dividends. Mr. Rhakman’s presence and contribution at the meeting showed just how committed he is to securing peace in this region as well.”

The reconciliation effort did more than just get two dozen insurgents to lay down their weapons; it also established credibility of coalition forces and further confirmed the abili-

ty of coalition forces to work together with tribal elders in a mutually supportive relationship, noted Breen.

“These fighters had been told by the Taliban that if they surrendered to the Americans that we would torture and execute them and that we were far worse than the Russians,” said Breen. “The village elders stepped in and told the fighters on our behalf that none of this was true and that we are here only to support a free Afghanistan and to help the democratically elected government establish peace and security.”

“So basically, these fighters had to take a leap of faith in trusting the word of the village elders over the word of the Taliban and ACM,” continued Breen, “while we had to take a leap of faith that the meeting wasn’t some guise to kill a couple of American officers and their sergeants.”

According to Campbell, there was understandably some tension early in the meeting.

“In the beginning, there was an unspoken tension in terms of that I think both sides were weary that the other might try to kill them,” said Campbell. “But once that dissipated, the

meeting went extremely well and the fighters agreed to resume their former lives in peace and to not take up arms against the Afghan government or coalition forces.”

Breen took the floor first at the meeting, and got straight to the point.

“For the men in this room who have laid down their weapons and pledged to no longer fight against the Afghan government and coalition forces, you are no longer my enemy,” said Breen through his interpreter. “And so long as you abide by your word and the conditions of the Afghanistan government’s reconciliation program, then you have nothing further to fear from us. You may rejoin your families, move back to your villages and live your lives in peace.

“To your former friends in the hills, pass to them that they face a very simple choice: Option one — they can do as you gentlemen have done and lay down their arms and go back to their villages to live a peaceful existence with no retribution from us. Option two — we will hunt them down and kill them.”

After making the options per-

fectly clear, Breen went on to commend the former fighters and praised the courage of their decision to follow the advice of the village elders.

“Your decision to come here today and begin the reconciliation process with the government of Afghanistan was more courageous than continuing the fight, because all of you embraced the unknown today and your own fear of what you’ve been told about the coalition forces and how you would be treated,” said Breen, as he continued to address the former fighters. “From this day forward we will live in peace with you.”

If this potentially historic initial trend of fighters coming down from the mountains and laying down their weapons while reconciling with the Afghanistan government continues in Kunar Province, then, Campbell noted, “we can stop focusing on fighting and start focusing on what we as a coalition really want to do, which is helping to build roads, schools and hospitals along with an infrastructure for the people of this region and ensure a lasting peace for a free and democratic Afghanistan.”

3/3, From A-1

Kraft will miss the birth of his daughter in April while he is in Iraq.

Before the Marines deployed, they spent a month at the Urban Warfare Training Center in the Mojave Desert conducting training missions night and day in a mock Iraqi village. There the Marines

learned valuable aspects of the Iraqi culture and what it will be like to patrol the cities in Iraq with the Iraqi Security Forces.

“The advanced party is going early to set the rest of the battalion up for success,” said Master Sgt. Ronald Rice, operations chief, 3/3. “Our main concern will be to make sure all the Marines will have a place to sleep before they get there and

to push information back to them to better prepare them. Then they will get here and be ready to come here and meet the local leaders, learn the routes and the local populace.”

Many of the 3/3 Marines will get the opportunity to go on missions with the Iraqi Security Forces to counter insurgents. This will give the Iraqi Security Forces a chance

to see how the Marines operate while they prepare them to take over the responsibility of their country’s security.

“We plan for everything and then some,” said Lt. Col. Norman Cooling, battalion commander, 3/3. “We cannot sit back and let the security of our nation lie in the hands of enemies that fly explosive-laden vehicles into buildings.”

Cooling assured his Marines, before they boarded a bus to the airport, if they remembered the training they received, they would have a successful deployment.

“Marines are about to see what the Marine Corps is all about,” said Ward. “Some are going to get some experiences out of this they will never forget, but that is the reality of

what we are about to go and do.

“We have to send a message out to terrorists to let them know that they are not going to continue conducting their operations and get away with it. This is my third deployment to the Middle East, and I will go back as many times as I have to until the terrorists are caught.”